

After the French elections, New Popular Front swings to the right

Alex Lantier
9 July 2024

The New Popular Front (NFP) carried Sunday's snap elections in France, as a surge in left-wing sentiment among workers and youth blocked a victory of the far-right National Rally (RN) and led to a debacle for President Emmanuel Macron's Ensemble coalition.

Workers and youth want an end to the rule of the banks, where the police state imposes policies on every great issue rejected by the vast majority. Seventy percent of the population reject Macron's call to send troops to Ukraine to wage war with Russia. There is broad revulsion at the Gaza genocide, opponents of which have been pursued on bogus anti-terrorism charges. And 70 percent also oppose Macron's pension cuts, which he imposed last year without a vote, sending cops to assault mass protests until union bureaucrats capitulated, calling off the strikes.

The NFP is, however, swinging sharply to the right in the aftermath of the election, as the product of its very own bankrupt, opportunist election strategy. It entered into an alliance with Macron against the RN, withdrawing its own candidates to strengthen Ensemble and Macron. After the elections, Mélenchon has focused entirely on negotiations with right-wing forces in the capitalist state, repeatedly asking Macron to name him prime minister, which Macron has refused to do.

In the meantime, the motley alliance of disparate parties that makes up the NFP is collapsing, as divisions erupt between Mélenchon's middle-class "populist" France Unbowed (LFI) party and the big-business Socialist Party (PS). There has been an outpouring of praise of the NFP from middle-class pseudo-left groups, but its rotten foundations are rapidly becoming very clear.

Much of the NFP is moving to openly ally with Macron, even as Macron refuses to honor parliamentary tradition and name Mélenchon prime minister. Forces around Clémentine Autain threaten to leave LFI and back a government led by the PS and the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) working with Macron. PS European candidate Raphaël Glucksmann demands that the NFP "get beyond ourselves," while PCF chairman Fabien Roussel demands it "show it can listen."

By thus blocking working class opposition to the capitalist state and Macron, the NFP strengthens Marine Le Pen, the leader of the RN. It opens a path for her to keep denouncing the "left" as a tool of the banks hostile to the French people, and consolidate support among millions of workers who voted RN out of disillusionment and bitterness with past PS governments' austerity policies.

The situation in France's corrupt political establishment is a

travesty of the real state of political relations. In France and internationally, there is overwhelming popular opposition to imperialism, fascism, genocide, police state rule, and social inequality. The struggle against Macron and Le Pen cannot be artificially limited to the parliament, but must find expression in a genuine revolutionary program for the class struggle.

A counteroffensive of strikes and protests in the working class must be prepared and initiated, mobilizing the left-wing sentiment among masses of workers and youth on demands that express the masses' objectively revolutionary opposition to capitalism. This is the way forward against both Macron and Le Pen, smashing the trap being set by forces in the NFP who tie anti-fascist sentiment to a debilitating alliance with the bourgeoisie and France's "president of the rich."

The NFP is moving to repeat within France the role of allies of Mélenchon and the PCF like SYRIZA (the "Coalition of the Radical Left") in Greece and Podemos in Spain. A Stalinist-populist coalition, SYRIZA was elected in 2015, promising to end EU austerity policies. In power, it formed a coalition with the right-wing Independent Greeks (ANEL) and promptly betrayed its promises, imposing billions of euros in EU cuts and setting up EU detention camps for refugees.

Podemos came to power in 2019 and seamlessly integrated itself into an anti-worker government led by the big-business Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE). It sent police to attack workers striking to demand security measures against COVID-19, oversaw the distribution of billions of euros of EU pandemic bailouts to major corporations, and directed brutal police crackdowns on truckers' and metalworkers' strikes. It armed the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion in Ukraine after the NATO-Russia war began in 2022, and sent weapons to Israel amid the Gaza genocide.

In the current explosive political situation, such betrayals of the hopes and expectations of the people can only produce disastrous consequences. Capitalist officials in France and all the NATO imperialist countries live in mortal fear of the masses. They openly plot imperialist war abroad and class war and dictatorship at home. Since "various suppressed angers could all explode at once," far-right General Pierre de Villiers has written in one far-right magazine, "We must think the unthinkable. ... The rule of law is obviously respectable, but at a certain moment one has to think strategically."

The working class needs its own demands around which to mobilize its social and industrial power against the reactionary

maneuvers of the ruling class. Such demands are the basis for winning back workers currently voting for the RN to support left-wing and socialist politics, and to fight fascism, genocide and war by struggling against capitalism.

The Parti de l'égalité socialiste advances for this purpose the following demands:

**No to imperialist war! Stop war with Russia, dismantle NATO!
French troops out of Africa and the Middle East!**

The NATO war against Russia, rejected by the overwhelming majority of the people, must be stopped. The vast military budget Macron imposed last year to pay for it, financed by his pension cuts, must be rescinded. Workers must demand France leave the imperialist NATO alliance, which threatens to trigger nuclear war, as part of an international struggle of the working class to dismantle NATO and stop its wars. Troops posted to neo-colonial wars in the Middle East and Africa must come home.

Stop the Gaza genocide! No persecution of opponents of genocide!

Workers in France and internationally must block the production and delivery of arms to the Israeli regime for the Gaza genocide. The prosecution of opponents of the Gaza genocide on bogus anti-terrorism or antisemitism charges must end, and fines and prison sentences imposed on them must be lifted. Israeli officials charged with genocide by international tribunals, as well as French and NATO officials complicit in this genocide, must be prosecuted.

Abolish the Fifth Republic's executive presidency!

Macron rules against the people by police repression and mass arrests of strikers and protesters. His CRS riot police descend from Nazi-collaborationist allies of Nazi SS units that fought the Resistance, as the "CRS=SS" slogan of the 1948 miners' strike and the 1968 general strike recalls. They must be dissolved, together with the executive presidency of the 1958 Constitution, based on which Macron threatened last month to suspend parliament and exercise absolute power.

Abrogate Macron's pension cuts, impound bank bailouts, billions for jobs and social programs!

Macron's illegitimate pension cuts must be rescinded, and the anti-democratic diktat of the banks over society broken. Workers must reject the lie that there is no money for social programs and jobs. Money must be found by impounding the hundreds of billions of euros of public funds grabbed by the financial aristocracy over the past decades in repeated bank bailouts that turned France into the country with Europe's wealthiest billionaires.

Stop the persecution of refugees and immigrants, for the international unity of the working class!

The mobilization of the working class in struggle requires unrelenting opposition to the bourgeoisie's attempts to divide it by inciting nationalism. Workers must oppose both the RN's calls to expedite mass expulsions of undocumented workers and strip dual nationals of French citizenship and anti-immigrant measures backed by Macron and the NFP. These include EU laws denying the right to asylum, setting up mass detention camps like those built by SYRIZA in Greece, and humiliating laws banning Muslim religious clothing in French schools.

For the United Socialist States of Europe

Workers and youth in France have powerful allies in this struggle among the millions of workers across Europe and internationally opposed to war, fascism, genocide and austerity. French union bureaucrats and parliamentarians will stand in the way. The way forward is for workers to build their own rank-and-file organizations of struggle and build a political movement to transfer power to the working class in France, across Europe and internationally, and replace the capitalist European Union with the United Socialist States of Europe.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact